

FD 35106

**Testimony of Peggy Maze Johnson
Board Member, Citizen Alert**

**Before the Surface Transportation Board
US. Department of Energy**

**Re: Construction and Operation of the Caliente Rail Line in Lincoln,
Nye and Esmeralda Counties, Nevada**

**Public Hearing
Las Vegas, Nevada
December 4, 2008**

Members of the Board and Members of the Community. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. And, on behalf of the people of Clark County thank you for agreeing to hold this very critical hearing in our County, in our State.

I am here representing Citizen Alert, an organization that began here in the state of Nevada in 1974. It was then that talk started in Washington, DC that there was going to be a determination made about where to "repose" tons of nuclear waste from reactor sites around the country, sites, mostly in the eastern and middle sections of the country. Many possible sites were going to be considered, and Nevada, in the west with was one of those states. A group of concerned citizens decided that they needed to alert our neighbors and friends here in Nevada of this possible impending danger to our safety, and Citizen Alert was born and incorporated in 1975. We started our work – educating Nevadans.

Unfortunately we were a small state with little or no power in the Congress of the United States and the decision was made that Nevada should have the "honor" of hosting this horrible waste at a site, sacred to the native people in our State, primarily the Shoshones, and other tribes. This congressional action was referred to as the "Screw Nevada" bill

In 1987, Citizen Alert, recognizing the menace of putting this most dangerous material known to humankind on the rails and roads of this country, formed the National Nuclear Waste Transportation Task Force. We built two mock nuke waste casks and started to tour the country to let people in other states understand that there was a menace that would possibly come to a road near them and put them at risk.

I understand that you are not here to discuss the merits of the Yucca Mountain Project or the suitability of siting a repository holding thousand of tons of dangerous nuclear waste in a totally unsuitable and dangerous site. I do understand that you are here to hear our comments on siting a rail line in a totally unsuitable manner through three counties that will be negatively impacted. You will hear some residents and paid representatives of

those counties come before you and tell you that this might be a great boon for their distressed areas. In these times of economic downturns that are almost unprecedented, in a state that is near the top of the lists of home foreclosures and unemployment there might be a sentiment to take anything that might help. I disagree.

Citizen Alert believes that the safety of our citizens must be first and foremost. You will hear from the experts that will go into the technical and scientific reasons why this is a bad idea. That is not my role here today. I thanked you for coming to Nevada and now I am going to challenge you to extend the same courtesy to the other counties around the country that will have the same exposure as Nevadans living in the exposure areas of the transportation routes. I believe that is your responsibility. People around the country know about Yucca Mountain, but are totally unaware how they might be affected by the transport of this terrible" stuff"!

I am submitting two reports that were prepared for the Nevada State Agency for Nuclear Projects. One details every county and the number of residents that will be impacted. The second report is a listing of every Congressional District (approximately ¾ of all Congressional Districts). Some of the Congresspersons listed with their political affiliation noted will not be serving in the next Congress but will be updated. But you can be sure that these elected officials are going to be apprised of the situation and know about the risks their constituents will be facing if this project is allowed to go further.

Therefore, Citizen Alert is requesting and strongly urging you to extend the same consideration to the rest of the country by holding these hearings along the proposed routes. We believe that this scheme of transporting this deadly material could result in tragic accidents and even more troubling, in these times when terrorism is on everyone's mind, that the risk of this material in the hands of terrorists would pose a risk that is incomprehensible to contemplate.

Thank you again for this opportunity.